

TOBACCO

"Lemme try one of those,"

Pete says in the workshed, reaching
for my tobacco pouch and papers,
spinning one quickly, evenly
in his fingers
licking and sealing the edge --
a perfect cigarette.

"But I don't smoke anymore,"
he hands it back.

"Still like to roll em.

Back home everybody rolls their own.
I knew one buddy lost an arm,
could roll em like tailor-mades
with one hand,

inside his coat pocket."

JOHN

John the groundsman
won't give Mitch
a ride to work even though
he drives right by his apartment.
"I don't have insurance
for you," John tells him,
but to others:
"The old bum, he's a boozier
if I ever saw one."

"Piss on him," spits Mitch.
"He's an ornry cuss
to work with."

But John,
out in his yellow rain slicker
cutting weeds under the water tower
with his scythe like a golfer,
John, who doesn't
give a hoot for Mitch,

cares for the desert marigolds
that scatter wild
across the spring floor,
and, though he doesn't have to,
cuts carefully
around each yellow clump.